ISLAM
AND
TERRORISM

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ORIGIN

Terrorism has become quite a phenomenon of the modern world. This savagery appears to be the most horrible barbarity unleashed by our post-Industrial civilisation. Something seems to have gone grievously wrong in the calculations of scientific materialism. The brute in man, discovered by the evolutionary theory of Darwin, brooding over the complexes devised by Freud, and entangled in the dialecticism of Marx, has come out to show off all the vagaries of his physiology, psychology and economics. The terrorist is the disgruntled irredentist of a society nurtured and nourished on selfish interests and grievances.

A crisis of confidence has gripped the most elightened age of the western concept. Nobody trusts anybody. Everybody desires to exploit everybody. No ideal of life inspires people. They are just hankering after an elusory standard of living. Moral values have been forsaken by them. Only political considerations are guiding them. There is a cut-throat competition for dominance. A balance of terror is generating lethal weapons, the stockpiles of which are tempting to the despots by nature. A few persons are monopolising all the fruits of progress. The rest are grudging this monopoly. The expansionist tyrants are casting their ominous shadow over the weaker sections of humanity, who are

reacting in a panic. Those who cannot afford to fight a regular war are marauding to snatch their supposed share from the clutches of those whom they condemn as usurpers. Acute senses of fear and inferiority have engendered a deep feeling of hatred. Those who presume to be suppressed and oppressed are out to take revenge from their persecutors.

GENESIS

This is individual or group terrorism, which has been occasionally provoked by state terrorism. Violence is in the air of the age. Intimidation and extortion are the order of the day. Neither any law nor any principle is acceptable and effective enough in certain areas to discipline and control those who are indulging in terrorism and counter-terrorism. The outlaws are the outcast. But their tormentors also have to share the blame they are heaping upon their victims.

A vicious circle has been started by the unjust decisions of the victorious powers of the World War II (1939-45). The Allies defeated Nazism and Fascism. But they supported Zionism and did not restrain colonialism. Consequently, the outrage of Algeria by France and the rape of Palestine by Israelis brought to the fore the guerillas, who succeeded in the French colony as freedom fighters, but are still struggling as liberators in the Israeli colony. The commandos of Al-Fatah fought for the restoration of their native land and

the rescue of their people from the clutches of latter-day Fascists. Then what happened in Vietnam was nothing less than the terrorism of a big power against a small people. This flashback would remind one of the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet Russia, which the Mujahideen have fought so valiantly and are about to retrieve their country in very near future.[1]

VIOLENCE

Violence certainly is the agency of terrorism. This is the means employed to achieve an end. The philosophical question of the rightness of means and end is very hard to discuss and answer in the present context. This much is certain and clear that non-violence cannot be adopted and adhered to as a creed. It can be only a policy or diplomacy. The role of non-violence in the Freedom Movement of India was actually in the nature of a policy and strategy against the invincible might of the British Empire, that could not be fought down with violence. The armed rebellion of 1857 had failed miserably.

Therefore, passive resistance appeared to be the only safe and sure weapon in a battle of nerves and war of attrition between the imperialists and their challengers. Even then sporadic terrorism persisted

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1. Afghanistan has now been liberated and Soviet Russia dissolved.

throughout the Independence struggle and was revered by Indians as a sign of patriotism. So much so that the soldiers of the Indian National Army, during World War II, in spite of casting their lot with the Nazis, became the heroes of the people as a whole and in general. As such, they were defended by the nationalist leaders, when tried by the British for treason.

REVERSAL OF ROLES

Violence or no violence, rebels have always been persecuted and prosecuted by both the society and the state, down the ages. Whether successful or unsuccessful, there has been a reversal of roles, in the attitude of the people towards the character of the rebels, with the passage of time. The challengers of an established power have either themselves become the rulers or been hailed as liberators and martyrs. So history passes the ultimate judgement and, sometimes, rectifies the injustice done to certain figures in the present time. Therefore, the contemporary phenomena should be considered in perspective and also with a vision.

What happened in Algeria and Vietnam, is just now happening in Afghanistan,[2] and may soon happen in Palestine. These are prominent cases in point. So every revolt or act of violence cannot be dubbed as terrorism.

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2.   The scenario is that of Afghanistan before liberation.

Some people may take up arms, resort to violence, either to defend themselves or vindicate their honour. *Commandos and guerillas are bands of fighters, who may have a cause to serve or a mission to fulfil.* Both their intentions and methods should be scrutinised on merit. Then only the fact of the matter and the truth of an issue would be discovered.

HARD TO DEFINE

Hence it is hard to define terrorism. The United Nations kept debating the issue, for fifteen years, from December 18, 1972, to December 7, 1987. But the members could not agree on a definition. Syria alleged that Israel started terrorism, in the Middle East, in 1954, when it shot down a Syrian plane. Libya charged the racialist governments with letting loose a reign of terror in South Africa, Namibia and Palestine. Then the bombardment of the Iraqi nuclear reactor by Israel and that of the Libyan city, Tripoli, by America are sheer acts of terrorism. So is the commando operation of America in Iran.

The events of Nicaragua, Poland and Central African Republic also suggest the same thing. As such, the member countries of West European Economic Community, Canada, Japan, Turkey, Argentina, Israel and America are all of the view that it is not possible to define terrorism. Albania has adduced economic, social, and political reasons for the inception and development of

terrorism, perpetrated whether by America in Vietnam, Iran, Grenada, Lebanon and Nicaragua, or by Israel in Palestine, Lebanon and the rest of the Arab World, or by South Africa in her own land as well as Namibia, or by Soviet Russia in Afghanistan. However, the U.N.O. resolved to condemn, in general terms, all terrorist acts including those of the States, undertaken directly or indirectly. The resolution was passed with the overwhelming majority of 153 votes, only two members differing or absenting.

A REALISTIC DEFINITION

Tyranny is the essence of terrorism. If some one, whether an individual or a group or a government, oppresses and harasses innocent people, a terrorist is born. This tormentor of mankind is cruel, selfish, and mischievous. The persecutor is an undesirable element of a civilised society. He is a sadist, a maniac, and a brute. He has no noble purpose to serve and does not observe any code of conduct consisting of the moral values of life. Such a person is a law unto himself. His anarchism knows no bounds. He can go to any extent simply to satisfy his lust or whim. His conscience is dead. His nature is malicious and character dubious. He overreaches himself and enjoys his viciousness. His personality is perverse and his bent of mind subversive. He indulges in intrigues for shady deals. Conspiracy and treason are his habit and function. Such a dreadful creature is a menace for the world and a curse upon the human race.

FUNDAMENTALISM & TERRORISM

The western press has raised the bogey of fundamentalism in the wake of terrorism, as if there was any connection between the two. This is in the western, particularly Christian, context. The medieval conflict between the church and the state, in Europe, was resolved in favour of the state, as far as the affairs of the society, in its political aspect, were concerned. Hence orthodox insistence on religion, in matters of the worldly life, was disapproved and puritanism was ridiculed. Catholicism was appreciated as a liberal view of life, permitting all deviations and accretions. The term secularism was coined in this perspective to eulogize a mundane outlook. Both the catholic church of Rome, in western Europe, and the orthodox church of Byzantium, in Eastern Europe, were thus relegated to the personal and private affairs of the individual.

There was a religious backlash in the Christendom and some pious people wanted to go back to the prestine glory of their faith. They desired to revive the fundamentals of Christianity and regain its roots. These persons were dubbed fundamentalists by their secular rivals and their revivalism was called fundamentalism. The secularists dreaded the obscurantist inquisition and persecution of intellectuals by the puritans of the past. So they sought to curb the aspirations of the religionists by defaming them.

But fundamentalism literally means radicalism, which is another name for the idea of total revolution. All social rebels and reformers have been radicals, trying to overhaul and renew old and stale conventions encrusting and encumbering a society. They have appeared in history as progressives whose reformative zeal has been resented and resisted by the conservatives. Such zealous people have been called fanatics. But the zealots themselves have pitied their opponents as morbid addicts to bad habits.

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

However, the fundamentalists in the history of Islam have always played a positive and constructive role. Orthodoxy in Islam has been a sign of enlightenment. Restoration of the basic values of Islam has always meant a rejuvenation of moral character and behaviour. A better view of life and a virtuous conduct has been the hallmark of Islamic fundamentalism. In modern history, after the dominance of the west in the world, the Islamic fundamentalists have been the pioneers of freedom movements. They have enthused people to shake off the foreign yoke and become masters, rather than slaves, in their own house. They were, as such, political rebels as well as social reformers. Their love for independence was, in fact, inspired by their fear of God. They surrendered only to their God, so that they could be free from slavery to any other man. Hence their insistence on piety and inculcation of probity.

ISLAM AND TERRORISM

In view of these realities, it can be confidently and categorically declared that there is no relation whatsoever between Islam and terrorism. The two are poles apart. Islam literally implies complete submission to God and its root word in Arabic connotes peace. Then the word, "Iman", a technical term for belief, is derived from "Amn", which means peace. Islam, as such, asks people to fear only God. How can it allow any man to frighten other men? A faith enjoining its adherents to submit to God would not let them submit to others, under duress. Intimidation and harassment is repugnant to the very spirit of Islam.

One of the social values of Islam is to greet one another with *"Assalaamo Alaikum"*, meaning "peace upon you." Muslims have been divinely directed to begin every work "in the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent." The opening chapter of the Quran, *Al-Fatiha*, gives the main attributes of God as kind and compassionate, the same with which one has to invoke blessing at the start of every work. All this indicates the nature and character of the Islamic society, which is full of peace, amity, affection, and benevolence. Love and sympathy are characteristic of the faithfuls.

ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF GOD

In this respect, the Islamic concept of God is to be duly studied. We have just seen His main attributes. Now it should be noted that these have been ascribed

to a Being who is "the sustainer of the creatures of the world" *("Rabbul Aalameen"),* as stated in the very first verse of the opening chapter of the Quran. The term "Rab" in Arabic is very significant and "sustainer" is only a common and partial translation. The annotators have explained that the term combines, to the limit, the idea of the love of both the mother and the father for their children, though God is not ethnically related to anybody, in the Islamic concept of monotheism, as against the view of Trinity in Christianity.

The following verses of the Quran underline the significance of divine love for humanity:

God says, "I damn only whom I intend to. Otherwise, My benevolence encompasses all things".
(Al-Aaraaf: 156)

God has made beneficence obligatory for Himself.
(Al-Anaam: 12)

Had God taken human beings to task for what they have earned, He would not have spared on the surface of earth any living creature. But He gives them time to an appointed hour.   *(Faatir: 45)*

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

Just as God is the sustainer of the world, the last Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad, peace upon him,

is a blessing and boon for the whole mankind:

> (God says), We have sent you to the world as a
> blessing for all its people. *(Al Anbia: 107)*

There is a saying of the Prophet himself that confirms this point:

> All creatures are children of God. So God loves him
> most who treats His creatures best.

So, it is that the Prophet has been called by the Quran "compassionate and benign", and his gentleness has been highlighted by the Book of God.

As such, the Shariat of Hazrat Muhammad, peace upon him, is the best dispensation for mankind. It seeks to ensure social justice to all people, irrespective of class, creed, and caste.

LAW OF RETRIBUTION

The Islamic concept of social justice is based upon the natural law of retribution, which judges men on merit, irrespective of their position. The motto of this law is, "As you sow, so you mow". Everyone has to reap the consequences of his actions:

> Whoever does an iota of goodness would get it and
> whoever does an iota of evil would get it.
> *(Al Zilzaal: 7-8)*

Disturbances erupted on land and water, due to
the deeds of men. So that God may make them
taste the consequences of some of their actions.

(Al Rum: 41)

Your Lord would not destroy places atrociously,
while the inhabitants are reforming things.

(Hud: 117)

Why should God damn you, if you have faith and
are thankful?   *(Al Nisa: 147)*

Had God not replaced some people with some of
them, the earth would have been ruined. But God
is benign with the world.   *(Al Baqarah: 251)*

CRIMINAL LAW IN ISLAM

The criminal law in Islam seeks just to codify the
natural law of retribution. Justice, according to the
Islamic perception of things, must run its normal
course, without any hindrance or diversion or distor-
tion, on extra constitutional considerations. All men and
women are equal in the eyes of the law. Those
perpetrating atrocities are not to be spared, on any plea
whatsoever. Then the punishments for the crimes, once
taken cognizance of and proved, ought to be deterrent.
Hence these should be harsh and serve as a stern warn-
ing to all potential culprits. The society must be purged
of all pollutants and purified of the contagious dirt

likely to affect the moral health of the common man. This is meant to keep the peace of the society intact and immune to all menace. But the law of evidence is very strict is Islam. A culprit can be convicted only on unimpeachable evidence, duly verified and established beyond any possibility of refutation. Hence it is not easy to punish criminals, unless they are conclusively proved to have really committed the crime, after which no mercy is shown to them:

We made it obligatory for them in the Torah that life be taken for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, all wounds thus avenged. Then, if some one forgives, it would be an expiation for him. But those who do not judge by divine injunctions are oppressors.   *(Al Maida: 45)*

O, the faithfuls, compensatory killing has been ·made obligatory for you, in cases of murder: freeman for freeman, slave for slave, woman for woman. But, if someone is forgiven by his brother in faith, the blood-money should be fixed and paid, in the normal course and rightly. This is a relief and mercy from your Lord. If someone transgresses, after this, he would be grievously damned. There is life for you in compensatory killing, O, the wise men. It is expected of you to desist from defying the law.   *(Al Baqarah: 178-79)* /

Thus the criminal laws devised by Islam combine justice with mercy. The criminal is not to be shown any mercy by the law-court, which has only to pass its verdict, strictly in accordance with the statutes. Then the complainant, after his plaint has been vindicated, may relent, if he so likes, of his own free will, and relax the punishment, provided that he is duly compensated for his magnanimity. In this judicious and balanced manner, the criminal is brought to book and the loss of the aggrieved is made good, to his satisfaction. Both the requirements of equality before the law and fraternity among the faithfuls are, consequently, simultaneously fulfilled.

This idea of Islamic justice is quite distinguished from the present and prevalent practice of the western system of law, which has been encouraging and pampering criminals, by its constant relaxations in punishments, in the name of liberal reforms. The very prisons of the so-called civilized and developed countries have been turned into health resorts and luxury houses. This hypocrisy violates all tenets of justice and ignores the realities of human nature. That is why crimes are rampant in the western countries and the westernized societies, whereas the Islamic states, where Shariat is being fully enforced, are largely free from crimes. The Islamic criminal laws ought to be viewed as a part and parcel of the general Islamic system of life, that makes for total peace in the society, doing away with the very temptations to vice and curbing criminal tendencies at the source.

ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF PEACE AND WAR

The Islamic concept of peace and war is based upon respect for life. Commenting upon the first murder in the world, when Adam's son, Cain, killed his brother, Abel, Quran declares:

> For this, we made it obligatory for the children of Israel that, whoever kills one person without any person having been killed or for creating disturbances on earth, he kills the whole human race, and one who saves a life he saves the whole human race. *(Al Maida: 32)*

Rioting is abhorrent to the spirit of Islam:

> That house in the other world we have built for those who do not show arrogance, nor do they desire to create disturbances. And the ultimate good is only for the pious. *(Al Qasas: 83)*

The Islamic view of life indicates that the earth has been made congenial for man by the grace of God, who has been sending his prophets to improve the world:

> Do not create disturbances on the earth, after it has been reformed, and pray to God with fear and expectation. The blessings of God are available to those who are doing good. *(Al Aaraaf: 56)*

This suggests an ethos of balance in the life of this world, which is not to be disturbed. So it is that those who seek to disturb it by their atrocities may be paid in

their own coins and made a deterrent example:

> If you take revenge, do it commensurately with
> what has been done to you. And, if you keep
> patience, it is good for you.   *(Al Nahl: 126)*

> If someone has transgressed against you, you may
> transgress against him, to the extent he has done.
> But fear God and know that God is with the pious.
> *(Al Baqarah: 194)*

Restraint and moderation are thus to be observed
in response to all provocation and aggression. It is in
this persepective that the Muslims were permitted to
fight their enemies and tormentors:

> Those being killed have been permitted to retaliate,
> as they have been oppressed, and God can cer-
> tainly help them. They have been unjustly driven
> out of their homes, simply because they call God
> their Lord.   *(Al Haj: 39-40)*

But this allowance for "Jihad" has been made with a
condition for moderation:

> Fight in the way of God those who are fighting you.
> But do not transgress. God does not like transgres-
> sors.   *(Al Baqarah: 190)*

In spite of the permission for a defensive war, a readiness for peace has also been inculcated:

> If they tend to peace, you also tend to that, and trust God.   *(Al Anfaal: 61)*

Then, if the enemy commits a breach of trust and breaks peace, a formal declaration should be made to end any international agreement, which is otherwise to be strictly observed:

> If a nation is suspected of breach of trust, declare the end of their agreement.   *(Al Anfaal: 58)*

These terms of war and peace are, obviously, the noblest, the most reasonable, and the most civilized ones. Fortitude, candour, and equity patently mark these terms. The Islamic war is, really and truly, meant for peace, without any hypocrisy and chicanery, which have been the distinctive features of national and international wars in modern times. The soldiers of God are missionaries rather than mercenaries.

TOLERANCE IN ISLAM

Apart from the laws, which would naturally have their own course, Islam asks its followers to observe maximum tolerance towards others, in their behaviour with the peaceful common people. Religious differences are to be tolerated and respected:

There is no coercion in religion.

(Al Baqarah: 256)

Do not abuse those deities they worship other than God. *(Al Anaam: 108)*

Even a common point is sought to be adopted by all religionists:

Tell the people of the Book, "come to a point common between us, that we do not worship any one except God, do not make others share with Him, and do not make some ones among us our Lord other than God. *(Aal-i-Imraan: 64)*

Cooperation with others, despite all differences, even conflicts, has been enjoined:

Your anger against people, who have stopped you from going to the sacred mosque, should not provoke you to transgress. Cooperate in virtue and piety and do not cooperate in sin and atrocity.

(Al Maida: 2)

Even preaching the way of God is to be done in complete goodwill and a reasonable manner:

Call people to the way of your Lord with reason and goodwill, and argue with them in the best style.

A defence also is to be made in the most polite fashion:

> Virtue and vice are not equal. Defend in the best way and return evil with good. As a result, your enemy would turn into a bosom friend.
>
> *(Haammeem Al Sajdah: 34)*

It is the limit of tolerance in Islam that the faithfuls have to put faith in all the prophets of God:

> All the faithfuls put faith in God, all His angels, all His books, and all His prophets, with the declaration that they do not distinguish between prophet and prophet. *(Al Baqarah: 285)*

It is this cardinal principle of monotheism on which are based all the criteria of honour:

> O, mankind, we have created you from one man and one woman, and turned you into groups and communities, for the sake of introduction. Undoubtedly, the noblest among you, in the eyes of God, is the one who is the most pious and virtuous.
>
> *(Al Hujuraat: 13)*

ISLAMIC VIEW OF TERRORISM

In view of the above facts, it can be confidently asserted that Islam wants to eradicate terrorism from the society and free it from all sorts of intimidation and subversion. That is why the Quran declares the faithful to be the most deserving of peace, which they have to

uphold and maintain, without letting any atrocity mix with it. Pure faith thus implies undiluted peace:

> Who between the faithfuls and the unbelieving is more deserving of peace? Those who put faith in God and do not mix their belief with atrocity, they alone are entitled to peace, and they are on the right path.   *(Al Anaam: 81-82)*

Hence the Quran has dubbed disturbance as something worse than murder:

> Disturbance is a greater evil than murder.
>   *(Al Baqarah: 217)*

Therefore, terrorists are to be dealt with severely, under the Islamic law, once it is proved that they have really terrorised innocent people, for their personal gains or mundane interests. They are the pests of which the society is to be cleared. Selfish tyrants, holding mankind to ransom, cannot be tolerated. They are like cancer in the body politic of the world and must be extirpated.

The thirty third verse of the chapter *Al Maidah* in the Quran suggests that the rioters, if captured before repentance, should be either put to sword or banished by the Islamic state.